

## Annual Status Report of Predator Control Measures Implemented by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

### Analysis of Cougar Predator Management 2019-20 (Pre-Predator Management Legislation) vs 2020-21 (Post-Predator Management Legislation)

#### Cougar

The new legislation (23-16-10 enacted by HB125 in 2020) directs the DWR director to enact predator management actions when ungulate populations are not meeting management population objectives, and DWR determines that predators are a significant cause. The Division implemented plans on 33 cougar harvest units based on analysis of cause of mortality, deer reproduction and survival data on those units. An analysis of harvest data from those units will give us a better indication of how the new legislation influenced cougar harvest in response to deer population concerns, and will likely require multiple years of predator management. This document will present data on impacts of predator management plans during the first year after the enactment of the legislation.

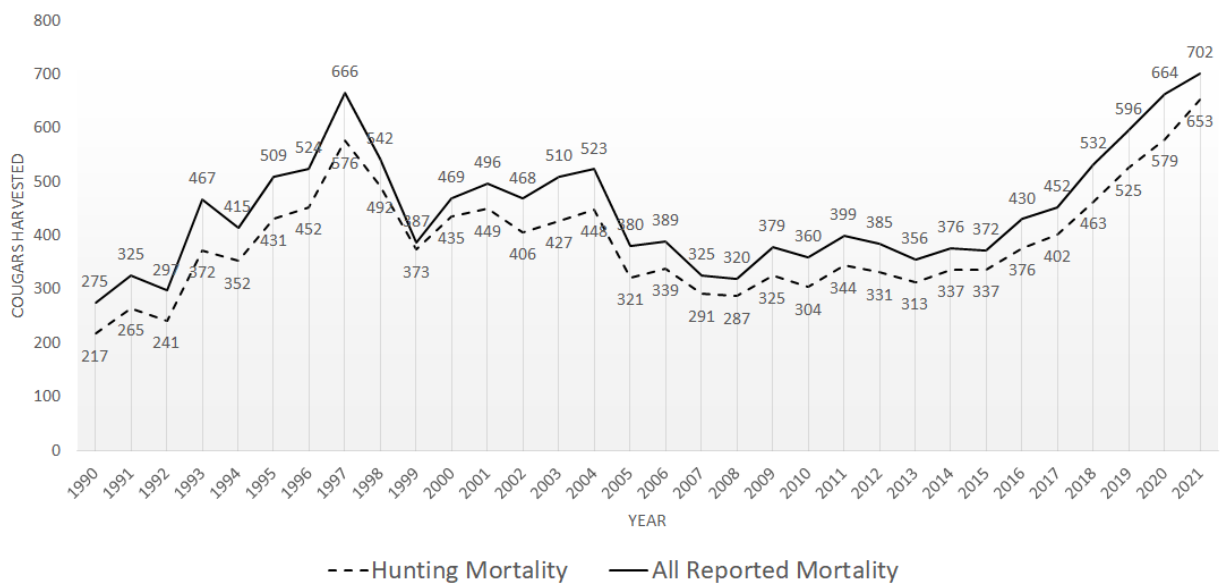


Chart 1. Total cougar mortality since 1990:

Overall Cougar Mortality from all Causes

2019-20: 664

2020-21: 702

Increase of nearly 6%

8/26/2021

## Overall harvest on Predator Management Units 2019-20 vs 2020-21

2019-20: 399

2020-21: 453

Increase of more than 13%

Prior to the passage of HB125 which created Utah Code 23-16-10, these units had quotas that would require them to close once quotas were reached. In 2020-21, those quotas were eliminated and units did not close. If harvest quotas had remained in place, many of the cougar units would not have met them in 2020-21 and would have remained open. However there were several key units that saw increased cougar harvest beyond old quotas and yielded the biggest impact of the new legislation. Units that saw the largest changes in cougar mortality due to the new management strategies were\*:

- Central Mtns, Northeast Manti (5)
- Central Mtns, Northwest Manti (2)
- Central Mtns, Southeast Manti (2)
- Fillmore, Pahvant (7)
- North Slope, Summit/West Daggett (4)
- Ogden (2)
- Plateau, Boulder (12)
- South Slope, Yellowstone (3)
- Wasatch Mtns, Cascade (5)
- Wasatch Mtns, Timpanogos (3)

\*Numbers in parentheses are the number of animals harvested above the 2019-20 quotas

It is also worth noting that changes to predator management strategies resulted in large increases in mortality on several units over last year. Cougar mortality on the East Manti units (North and South) increased from 21 to 48 (about 129% increase). Mortality on the Plateau, Boulder increased from 13 to 35 (about 169% increase). Mortality on the San Juan Mountains increased from 8 to 23 (about 188% increase). This is interesting because although these units only increased mortality by a few individuals, or did not meet the 2019-20 quota, harvest increased significantly under the new strategies.

Another change made last year was an increase in bag limit to two cougars per year. So far, 77 people have taken an additional cougar during the hunting season of 2020-21.

It will be necessary to monitor these units over the next few years to see if additional patterns emerge.

### Spot and Stalk Cougar Hunting

The DWR director also implemented a spot and stalk hunting opportunity for big game hunters in 2020. A hunter may purchase a permit for \$30 to hunt without the aid of dogs from August 1 through December 31. Hunters purchased 1,075 of these permits last year, and 7 cougars were taken by those hunters. DWR anticipated this hunt would be low success, but many people purchased the permit "just in case" they saw a cougar while afield. Cougars harvested during this



hunting opportunity do not count towards any unit quotas. A spot and stalk hunt remains in place and will continue for the foreseeable future.

### Bears

Bear harvest was reported last winter (Dec. – Jan.) at the Regional Advisory Council and Wildlife Board meetings (See Chart 2). Units were reviewed in January and biologists felt that the current harvest strategies are sufficient to meet any concerns about mule deer population growth rates. The next three year bear management cycle will begin with recommendations this winter.

Statewide Black Bear Harvest and Permits Issued 2009-20

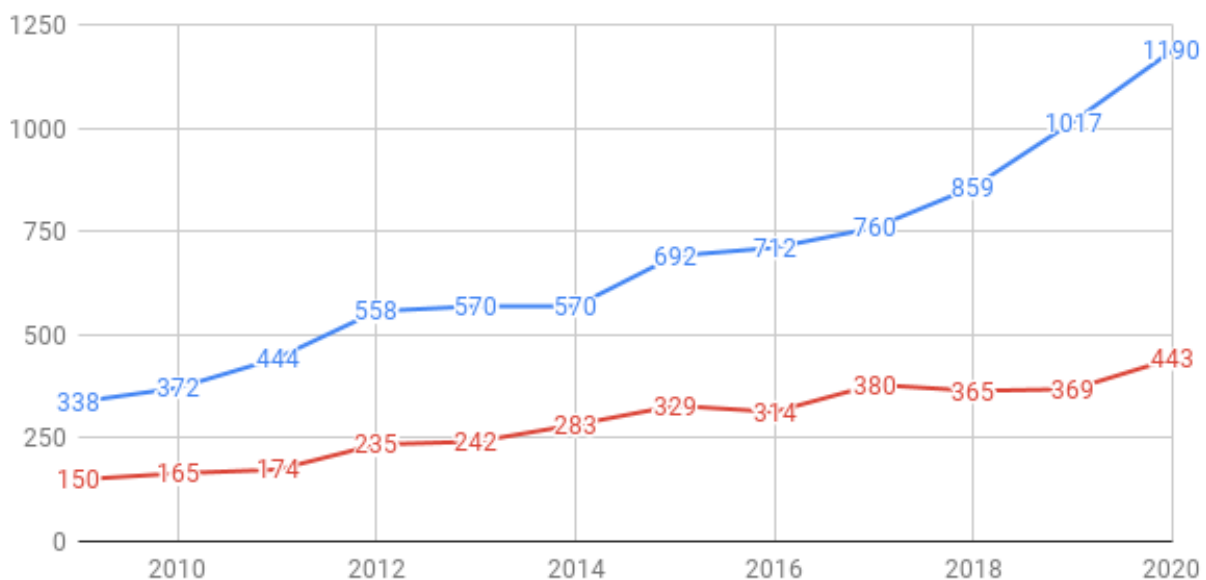
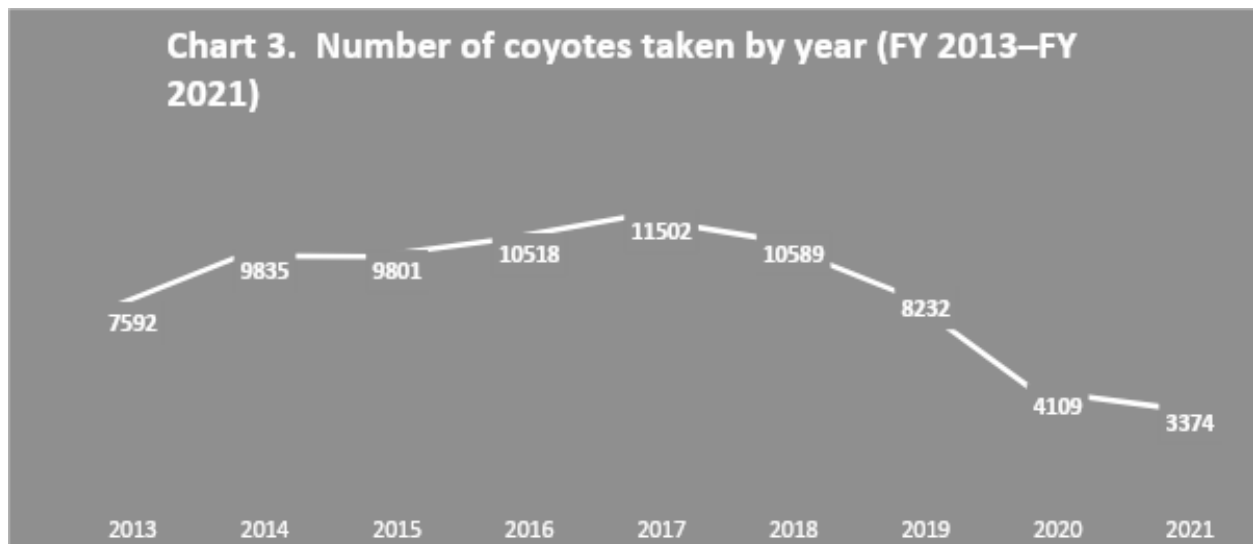


Chart 2. Statewide black bear harvest and permits issued 2009-20. Here shown is black bear harvest in red (lower line) and black bear permits issued in blue (upper line).

### Coyotes

DWR Continues to administer two programs meant to reduce impacts of coyotes to mule deer populations both statewide, and in targeted mule deer fawning areas. The first program provides an incentive payment of \$50 to hunters and trappers who turn in coyotes they have killed to DWR. Chart 3 shows the numbers of coyotes turned in for incentive payments from 2013 through March 2021.



In addition to the incentive program, DWR has partnered with the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food and USDA Wildlife Services to conduct targeted removal of coyotes in areas that will benefit mule deer fawns as they are born each spring. In FY21, this targeted program removed 586 coyotes from core areas identified by DWR as crucial fawning areas. DWR also provides funding for county match programs that removed an additional 585 coyotes from areas where both livestock and mule deer can benefit.